

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Jesus Showed Sympathy – 13-19 August 2016

Christ is always sympathetic to His people, for He is our compassionate Lord and Saviour. It is recorded of Him: "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

One example of how Jesus showed sympathy is in resurrecting Lazarus – John 11:32-45.

Jesus was in a retired place beyond Jordan, where He had gone to escape the continual persecutions of the Jewish rulers. There He taught; the people in quiet, "and many believed on Him there" (John 10:42). While He was there, one of His dearest friends, Lazarus, fell ill, and his sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick" (John 11:3).

"When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). Yet Lazarus died. What shall we say, therefore? What should we say if it were a present instead of a past occurrence? if we had received the assurance that our loved one's sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, and he was now lying cold and lifeless? Would we say that the word of the Lord had failed? that either the Lord had made a mistake, or else we had misunderstood His words? That is what we should be likely to say, but it is just what we ought not to say. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25). Although Lazarus had been dead for days, his sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God. Can you believe the word of the Lord even when it is very "*apparent*" that it has failed? That is faith; and faith that will not be shaken by anything that appears, will bring victory out of defeat, and life from the dead.

At last the Master, had come to the home where He had passed many pleasant hours in unrestrained, quiet, Christian fellowship. He was met with the words, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:21, 32). This was the greeting of each sister. It almost seemed as if the Friend had been indifferent. He had tarried two whole days after hearing of the sickness of Lazarus, before making any movement toward going to see him. Oh, glorious indifference! It was the indifference of Omnipotence, – not indifferent to human suffering and human need, but indifferent to the threats of a foe whose utmost power could avail nothing. It was the immovable calm that comes from the consciousness of "all power." No one can by any means pluck a single soul out of the hand of the great Shepherd. The gates of the grave cannot prevail against one of those whom He bears upon His heart.

What need to be in a hurry? "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16). To the Lord, it proved nothing that the grave had closed for a moment upon whom it claimed as its prey; for He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die" (John 11:25-26). What a marvellous confidence in the power of the Father, was manifested in the *seeming* indifference of Jesus! He claimed nothing for Himself; He acknowledged that He had no power in Himself; but He knew what He had believed, and in quietness and in confidence was His strength. A lesson of trust in the story of Jesus and Lazarus! "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4).

"Jesus wept" (John 11:35). So did Mary and Martha; so did the Jews who had come to condole with them; all wept. But whoever supposes that Jesus wept as the rest did, makes a great mistake. In the Greek two different words are used, as seen in some translations. The word used for Mary, Martha and others is properly rendered "weep," and may be used to indicate any loud lamentation and wailing. But Jesus simply "shed tears." The fountain of Divine compassion is always full to overflowing. Jesus must shed tears at the sight of human anguish, even when He knew that the power was in His hands to remove it, and He was just on the point of doing so. Here is an example to us, that we may "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). He who sorrows only with Jesus, and only as He sorrows, has such joy as the world knows nothing of.

"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). Did any dazzling light shine upon the company there assembled? No; everything was quiet, and no light appeared to any, except the ordinary daylight; yet all present saw the glory of God. How? – In the power that was displayed in the

resurrection of Lazarus. The power and the glory of God are the same – this is learned by comparing Romans 6:4 and Ephesians 1:17-20. In the former we see that “Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,” and in the second we read that the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and His elevation to the right hand of God in the heavenly places, was the result of the working of the “mighty power” of God. His power was “wrought in Christ,” and, moreover, the Spirit of God earnestly desires that we may know the “exceeding greatness” of this power, which is “to usward who believe.” Whatever God’s Spirit desires for us, we shall have if we consent to be led by His Spirit. Let us think what this means to us.

The glory of God is the power of the resurrection, and this power it is possible, nay, absolutely essential, for us to know (Philippians 3:10). We are exhorted thus, “Glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:30). This can mean nothing less than that the power of Christ’s resurrection is to be manifested in the bodies of Christians. But this is the power by which Lazarus was raised from the dead, – the power by which Christ was raised from the grave. And this means a power – the life of Christ – in men that will lift them above the power of death. The apostle says, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11).

The same thing is set forth in Romans 8:10-11: “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” The Spirit is life; therefore the Spirit cannot *dwell* in a man in fulness without imparting life to that man. The life of the Spirit makes the man live in spite of mortality. That this imparting of life is now, in the present world, and not something to be expected in some future state, is shown by the verse following: “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Having received the Spirit of Christ (Galatians 4:6), we are debtors to live according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh. The Spirit of Christ gives us all Christ’s fulness, we owe everything to Him; in that condition the flesh gives us nothing of its corruption, we owe nothing to it. When the flesh gives us nothing of its corruption, then we are delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glory of the liberty of the sons of God.

The same truth is taught in Isaiah 40:3-5: “The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” The way of the Lord is prepared by preparing the people for the Lord, “And thou, child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins” (Luke 1:76-77). The Lord’s way is in the hearts and lives of His people. When that way is prepared, then the glory of the Lord may and will be revealed in His people; and the glory of the Lord is His life. It is by believing that we receive the Lord, and become sons of God; and thus it is that to us, as also to the sisters of Lazarus, the words: “If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God” (John 11:40). What glorious things God has prepared for them that love Him!

“Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44). Christ came to set the captives at liberty. “I the LORD have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Isaiah 42:6-7). The word of reconciliation is committed to us who are reconciled. To men is entrusted the work that Jesus began. “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves” (Isaiah 49:8-9) – here it is believers in Christ that are the ones addressed (compare with 2 Corinthians 6:1-2). Not only are Christ’s people to have the unconquerable life of Christ manifested in their own mortal flesh, but they are to show His sympathy to all.